Remembering Canadian Astronaut Marc Garneau 1949 – 2025

prepared 7 June 2025 by Neil Carleton VE3NCE for the Almonte Amateur Radio Club

There have been many tributes this past week to Canada's first astronaut in space. Dr. Marc Garneau … PhD in electrical engineering … was a national hero who inspired generations. His rich legacy includes a classroom connection many years ago at R. Tait McKenzie Public School in Almonte.

During Dr. Garneau's last space flight, in December 2000, when space shuttle Endeavor was docked at the International Space Station, my grade 6 students in Room 22 listened on shortwave to the voice communications of the astronauts in orbit. It was exciting to hear Marc Garneau speaking on the shuttle with Mission Control. We also heard the American and Russian astronauts talking about their work on the space station's solar panels.

First contact

Emily Barr, a student at R. Tait McKenzie Public School, was listening carefully on Friday in an attempt to hear transmissions from the space shuttle Endeavor. The listening project was part of a space studies program in Neil Carleton's Grade 6 class.

R. Tait students explore mysteries of outer space

By Grade 6 class
R. Tait McKenzie

The Grade 6 students in Ms. Neil Carleton's class at … Garneau on the shuttle speaking with Mission Control in Houston. The space shuttle crew was … heard Russian astronauts on the International Space Station.

This class-listening proj… about the TV camera on the end of the Canadarm as they sent pictures of the solar panels to Earth. The

Almonte Gazette 13 December 2000

AP/NASA TV

Endeavour astronauts Marc Garneau, left, and Brent Jett, middle, are given a tour of the space station yesterday by commander Bill Shepherd.

Garneau to hang up space wings

GARNEAU *from page A1*

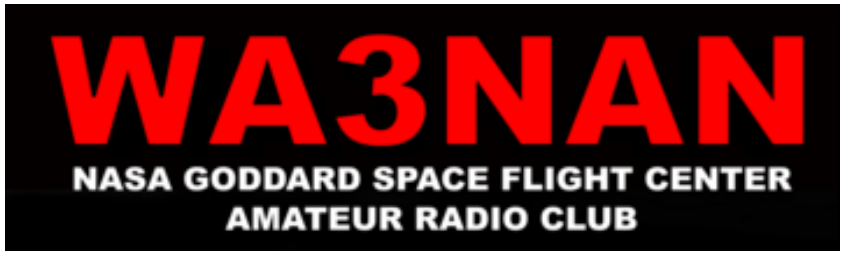
Sounding philosophical, Mr. … dinary experience of your daily life."

Endeavour's visit to the space … The shuttle's five astronauts became the space station's first guests in 38 days.

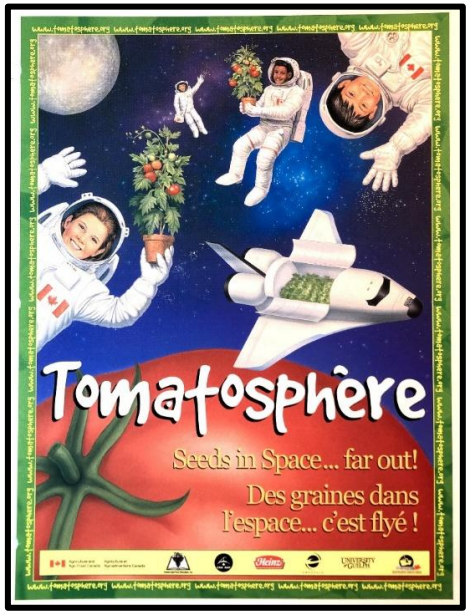
Mr. Garneau and the shuttle crew have been responsible for installing and activating solar panel…

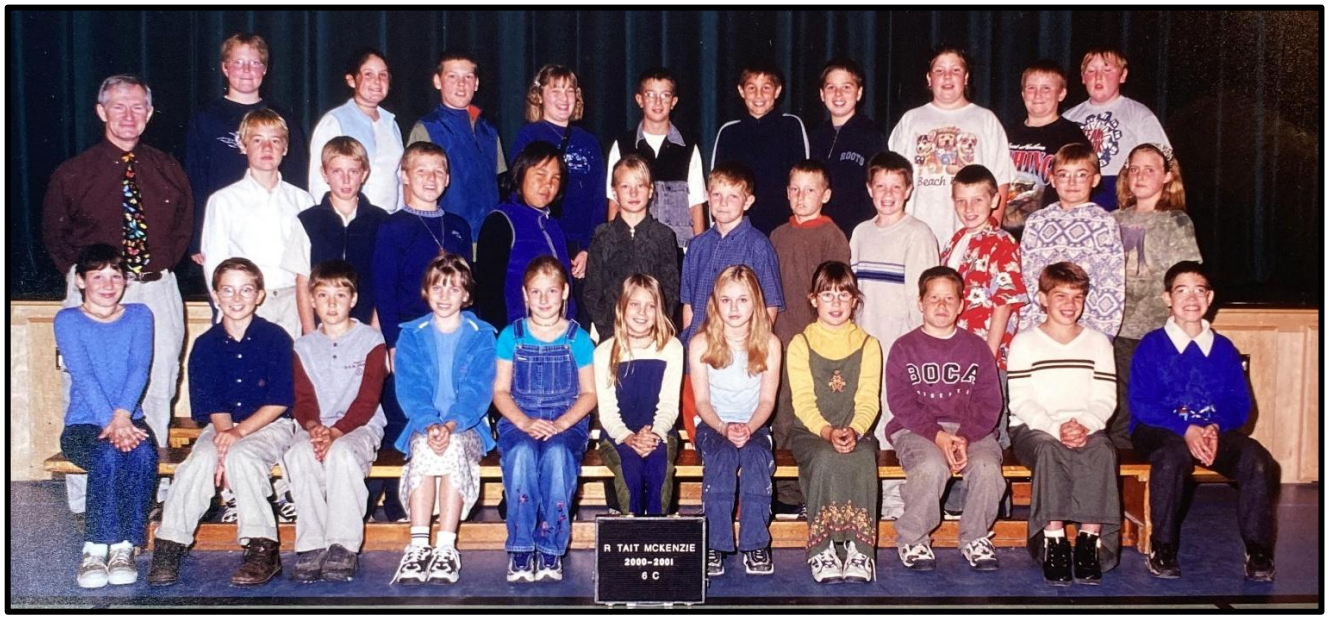
Globe and Mail 9 December 2000

Teams of students used portable receivers with earphones to monitor the mission's progress. There was a tabletop receiver too so the whole class could follow along over several days. This listening adventure was part of our grade 6 science studies of space. We were able to hear Dr. Garneau on his last space mission thanks to a special retransmission of shuttle communications by amateur radio on 7.175 MHz from the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland.



In orbit on Endeavor with Dr. Garneau for the 11 days of his last space flight was a large package of tomato seeds that he brought back to Earth for the Tomatosphere Project of Agriculture and Agi-Food Canada. Teachers across the country were invited to apply for this unique research opportunity where grades 3 to 6 students would compare the germination and growth rates of space travelled seeds with seeds that stayed on Earth. It was an exciting day in January 2001 when my grade 6 students and I opened our Tomatosphere kit.





R. Tait McKenzie students set to participate in space age project

By Phil Ambroziak
Gazette reporter

Grade 6 students from R. Tait McKenzie Public School are preparing to blastoff to a new level of learning thanks to the combination of short-wave radio, space and seeds.

The class, under the tutelage of teacher Neil Carleton, has been selected to participate in a nation-wide event known as the 'Tomatosphere Project'.

"It all started when the students were listening in class (via short-wave radio) to the space shuttle Endeavor (during mission STS-97) in December," Carleton said. "(Canadian astronaut) Marc Garneau was on the mission and we actually listened to Marc on the shuttle when it was docked at the International Space Station."

Students from Neil Carleton's Grade 6 class at R. Tait McKenzie Public School have been chosen to participate in a nation-wide project known as the Tomatosphere project. The class' continuing studies of short-wave radio, space and seeds will assist them in growing tomato plants from seeds that travelled through space with astronauts last month. Front, left to right are Hal McPhail, Andrew McDougall and Brittany Jackson. Back, left to right are Alec Norris and Rebecca McKay.

"The project is run by the Canadian Space Resource Carleton said. "We'll start the planting project then a class to what condition the seeds were in on the shuttle

Carleton noted the radio

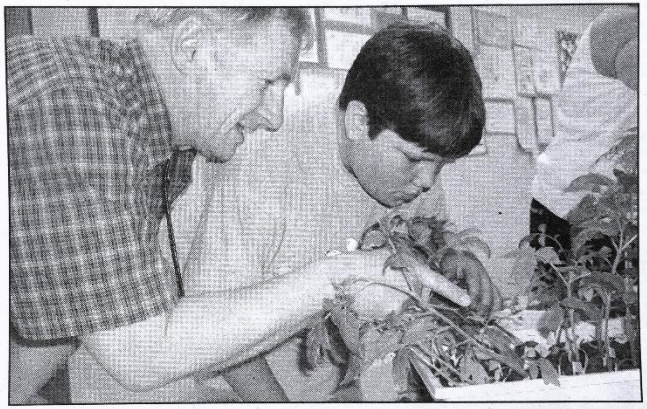
Tomato plant study blasts off for group of local students

By Phil Ambroziak
Staff writer

Local students have taken their study of seed growth beyond the classroom and into the far reaches of outer space.

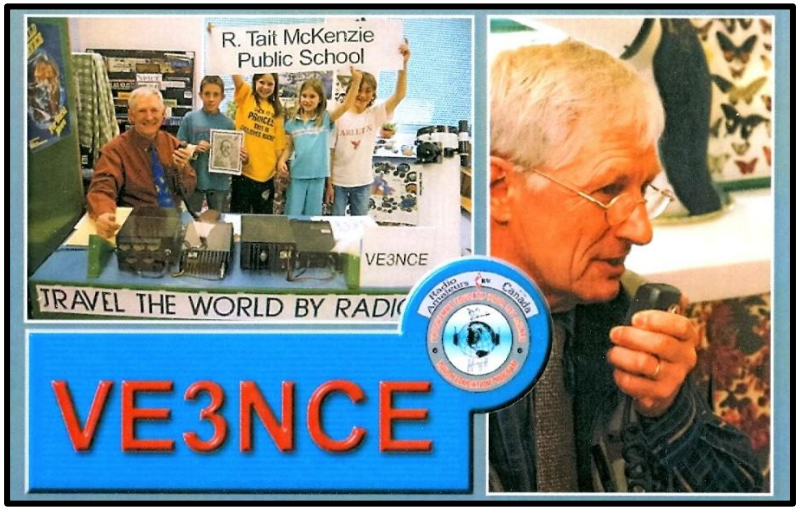
Neil Carleton's Grade 6 class from R. Tait McKenzie Public School in Almonte recently participated in a nation-wide endeavor known as the "Tomatosphere Project" - an exercise that saw young learners study the growth and germination rates of tomato plants under a variety of controlled settings. After almost three months, the results of their educational, yet extremely entertaining experiment have finally been established.

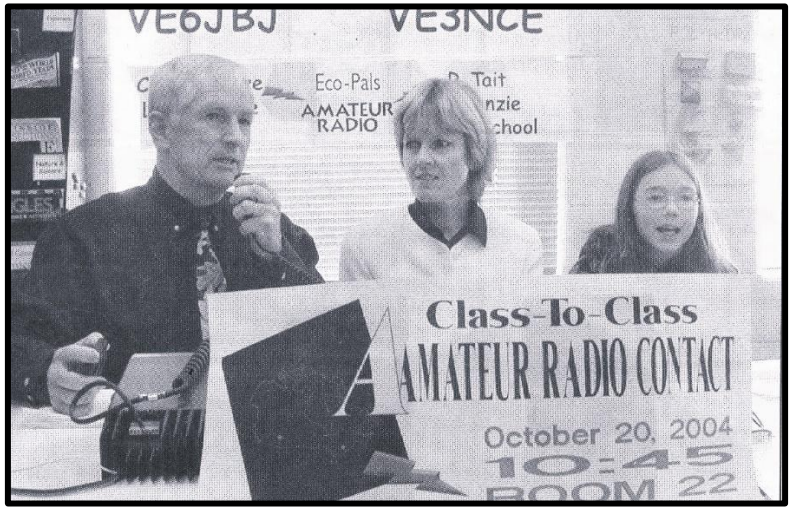
"I'm very pleased with (the results from) the Tomatosphere Project because as an experiment nation period for untreated noted.

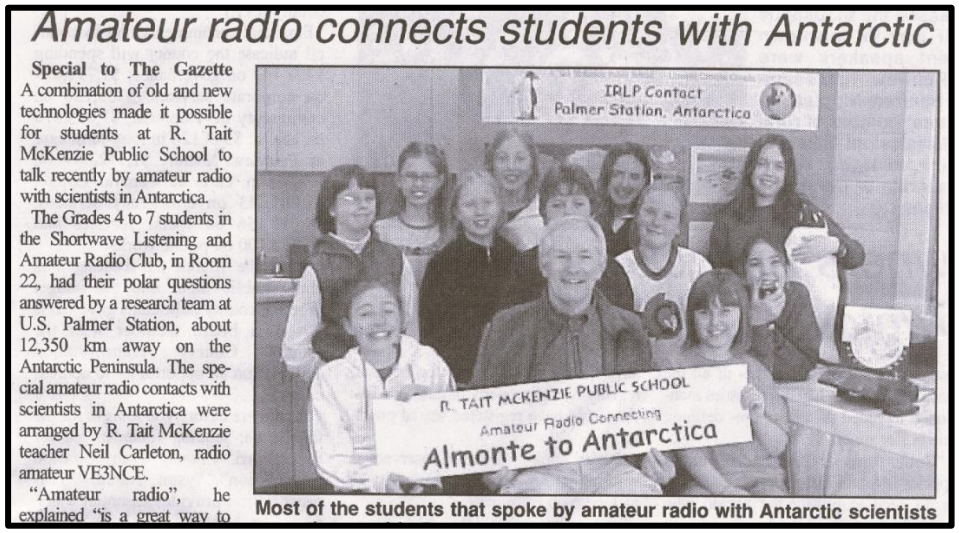


Neil Carleton, Grade 6 teachers at R. Tait McKenzie Public School in Almonte and student Michelle Seward examine one of the many tomato plants Carleton's class planted and have been observing as part of the Tomatosphere Project. The nation-wide experiment compares the growth and germination of regular tomato plants and those whose seeds have travelled for the far reaches of space,.

That spring I obtained my amateur radio qualifications. Each week in Room 22 I used amateur radio with my students to make connections across the curriculum … from math and language to science and social studies. Our class-to-class activities ranged from on-air contacts around the world to the postal exchange of student projects with other schools.







Amateur radio connects students with Antarctic

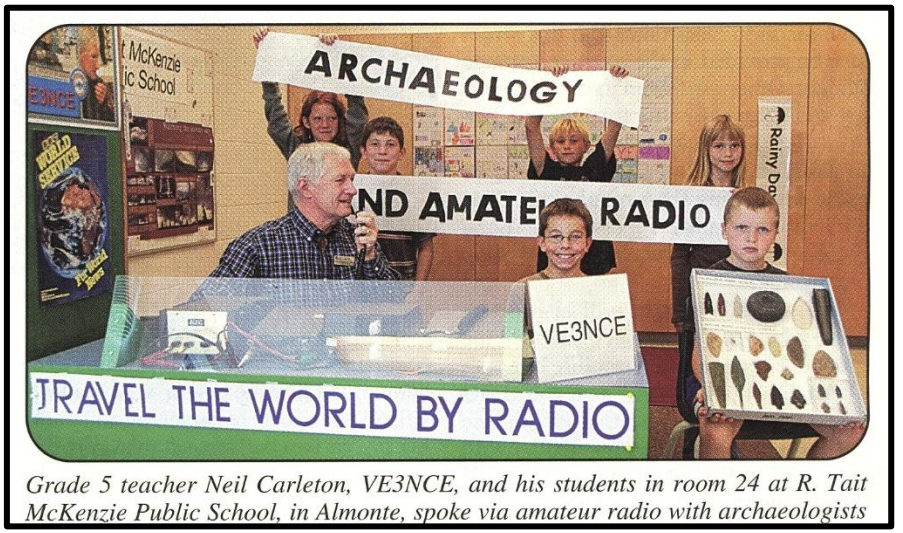
Special to The Gazette

A combination of old and new technologies made it possible for students at R. Tait McKenzie Public School to talk recently by amateur radio with scientists in Antarctica.

The Grades 4 to 7 students in the Shortwave Listening and Amateur Radio Club, in Room 22, had their polar questions answered by a research team at U.S. Palmer Station, about 12,350 km away on the Antarctic Peninsula. The special amateur radio contacts with scientists in Antarctica were arranged by R. Tait McKenzie teacher Neil Carleton, radio amateur VE3NCE.

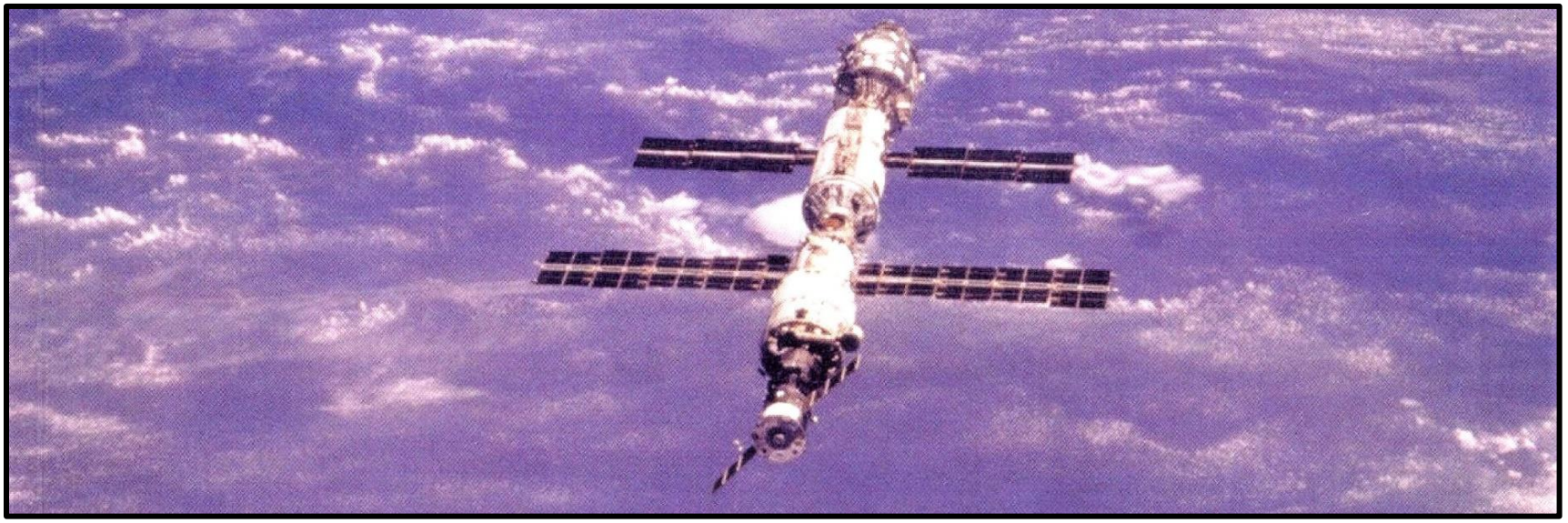
"Amateur radio", he explained "is a great way to

Most of the students that spoke by amateur radio with Antarctic scientists



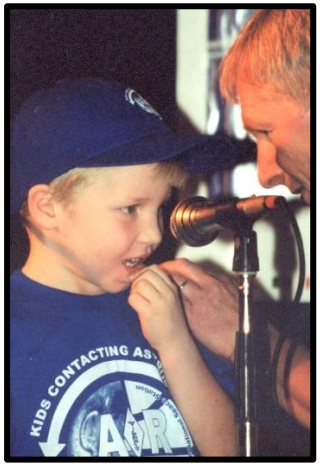
Grade 5 teacher Neil Carleton, VE3NCE, and his students in room 24 at R. Tait McKenzie Public School, in Almonte, spoke via amateur radio with archaeologists

At 5:46 a.m. on November 23 in 2001, before a community audience that filled our school's gym, 9 students from kindergarten to grade 8 took had their questions about space answered by the Commander of the International Space Station as the Expedition 3 crew passed high overhead in orbit. A video of the NA1SS contact is available at this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0zMn16z8to.

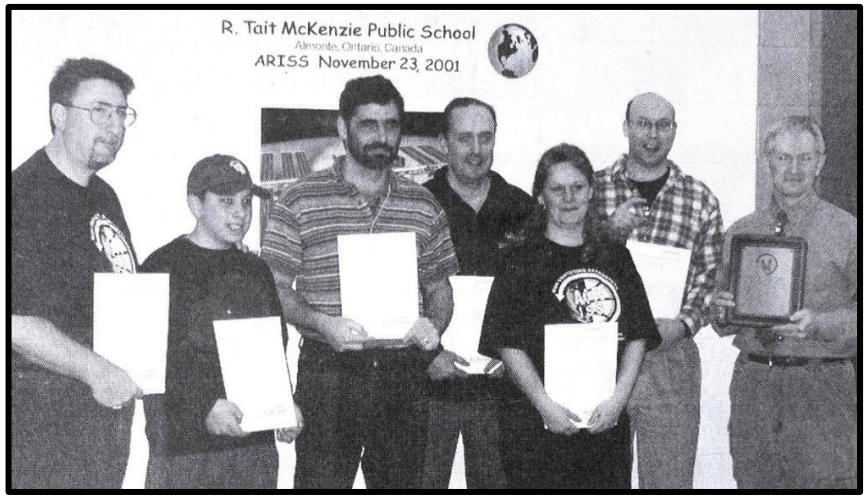


International Space Station during Expedition 3

ISS Expedition 3 Crew … Mikhail Tyurin … Commander Frank L. Culbertson Jr. … Vladimir Dezhurov



This once-in-a-lifetime adventure was possible thanks to volunteers of the Almonte Amateur Radio Club. Each member of the Club's ARISS team received a certificate of recognition, as an honorary member of the Canadian space program, from Marc Garneau.



Almonte Gazette 16 January 2002 … Bob VE3NCE … Travis … Phil VE3CIQ … Dale VE3XZT … Sandy VE3AFW … Andrew VE3UIY

Many students, parents and other community residents wrote to the Canadian Space Agency requesting an astronaut visit. On October 1 in 2002, Canadian astronaut Dr. Robert Thirsk … engineer / physician / VA3CSA … arrived at our school. During his two presentations for primary and junior classes, about 800 students from Almonte's three elementary schools heard first-hand what it was like to travel in space. Dr. Thirsk was presented with second generation tomatoes grown in Almonte gardens … descendants of the plants that grew from seeds Marc Garneau brought back from his last mission in space.

Astronaut paid a special visit to R. Tait McKenzie Public School

Almost 800 students from Almonte's three elementary schools heard first hand today from visiting Canadian astronaut Dr. Robert Thirsk what it's like to travel in space. Speaking in the gym at R. Tait McKenzie Public School, Dr. Thirsk made two presentations in the morning to the students of R. Tait McKenzie, Naismith Memorial and Holy Name of Mary schools. At the first presentation for primary classes, kindergarten to Grade 3, hands were up everywhere as the

program at the Johnson Space Center. In this important job, he relays voice calls and other communications between Mission Control and the space station crew. After his presentation at R. Tait McKenzie, Dr. Thirsk left for Houston Texas, where he was scheduled for duty the next day at Mission Control for the launch of the space shuttle Atlantis.

Dr. Thirsk's special visit was the latest in a series of space projects at R. Tait McKenzie. In addition to planting tomato seeds that

During his national radio and TV interviews this week https://www.ctvnews.ca/video/2025/06/05/ctv-national-news-garneau-was-an-astronauts-astronaut-he-was-the-best-of-the-best/, Dr. Thirsk paid tribute to his mentor as an astronaut's astronaut and the best of the best. Here in Almonte the legacy of Marc Garneau will be remembered for many years.

Canadian Space Agency
Agence spatiale canadienne
Certificate of Recognition
The Canadian Space Agency recognises Neil Carleton, VE3NCE, as an honorary member of the Canadian Space Program for his work, as a member of the R. Tait McKenzie Public School amateur radio team, with the successful ARISS contact at 5:46 a.m. on November 23, 2001.
10 Dec 2001
Date
Marc Garneau
President, Canadian Space Agency
Canada
CSA ASC